



Sharing Ohio's Best Program

Recognizing Outstanding Community Policing



Agency of the Month

Ada Police Department

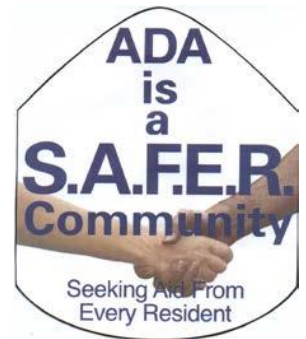
January 2020

S.A.F.E.R. Program (Seeking Aid From Every Resident). . . .

S.A.F.E.R. (Seeking Aid From Every Resident) is a policing program created by Chief Michael Harnishfeger of the Ada, Ohio Police Department in 2001. The essence of S.A.F.E.R. is to constantly remind and encourage residents of their role in making their community a safer place and to reward community residents when they do participate in making their community a safer place to live.

Understanding that local police jurisdictions are comprised of too few police officers, it is incumbent on residents to take an active role in the safety and security of their own neighborhoods and communities, and to partner with local law enforcement in this endeavor.

S.A.F.E.R. does not break any new barriers of program designs but rather attempts to combine many elements of successful endeavors into one program model. The program name, S.A.F.E.R. offers a great way to capitalize on name recognition and to create an association of duty with the name; in other words, when the public hears the word safer or observes a public S.A.F.E.R. sign, they will come to know that their community is only safer when they take an active role by partnering with local law enforcement.



The details of the S.A.F.E.R. project set the program apart from other policing programs. S.A.F.E.R. is an all-encompassing policing program within a community and engenders a sense of duty and responsibility with those they serve. To create this sense of duty and to constantly remind residents of their responsibility to their community, the S.A.F.E.R. program utilizes name recognition, signs, and frequency of use to promote law enforcement and community partnership. For example, S.A.F.E.R. Kids programs teach children early on of their duty to the community through police interactions at their grade level. S.A.F.E.R. Alerts are designed to alert residents of a specific issue or to request their assistance in a specific matter. S.A.F.E.R. Awards are designed to recognize folks who assist in solving a significant crime or other notable community act. The S.A.F.E.R. street sign is shaped as a shield and is different than any other signage to stimulate symbol recognition and continually generate the idea of "keeping my city safer".

These various uses of the S.A.F.E.R. acronym and word, as well as posting signs within the community are continual reminders to the public of the community partnership and goal of keeping a community safer.

S.A.F.E.R. utilizes the following program sub-attributes to combine in making an overall effective S.A.F.E.R. program:

- S.A.F.E.R. Committee
- S.A.F.E.R. Signs
- S.A.F.E.R. Paper
- S.A.F.E.R. Alerts
- S.A.F.E.R. Kids
- S.A.F.E.R. Awards



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S.A.F.E.R. Committee

The S.A.F.E.R. Committee is an important element of the program as it brings together various representatives of the community, including law enforcement, colleges/schools, business, government, and members of the public. The S.A.F.E.R. Committee should be comprised of participants who represent the different elements of your local community or district. The committee should meet as needed to discuss program issues, direction of the program, award nominations and selection, and S.A.F.E.R. Kids programs.

The make-up of the committee should reflect the general diversity of the community and the different elements (i.e. business, industry, schools, etc.) which work together for the common good of the community. The committee should be invited to attend all award presentations and community events that surround the S.A.F.E.R. program. This committee should demonstrate the effectiveness of all segments of society working together to keep communities safer.

The S.A.F.E.R. Committee should be organized and lead by the local police chief or designee as the law enforcement leader holds ultimate responsibility for the safety and security of the public. This leadership should demonstrate to the community, the aspiration of the local law enforcement agency to proactively reduce and solve criminal and nuisance issues within the neighborhoods.

S.A.F.E.R. Signs

The S.A.F.E.R. sign is placed in different parts of the community for high visibility and as a constant reminder to the residents. Strategic locations should include parks, stadiums, public swimming pools, schools, government offices and various locations as street signs. The top right-hand corner of this letter displays the shape of the sign which is different from any current signage and is in the form of a shield by design. The jurisdiction name is placed at the top of the sign to publicly declare your city - a S.A.F.E.R. city.

S.A.F.E.R. Paper

The S.A.F.E.R. Paper is a monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly newsletter which is put out by the lead agency to keep the residents abreast of issues facing the community, to introduce agency personnel to grow the agency's relationships within the community, to announce S.A.F.E.R. Kids events, to make notifications of S.A.F.E.R. Awards if appropriate and generally, a newsletter to bring the agency and community closer together by sharing information. In some cases, advertising can be sold within the S.A.F.E.R. Paper to assist in funding the program as needed.

S.A.F.E.R. Alerts

Just as an Amber Alert is issued for a missing child, the S.A.F.E.R. Alert is used to alert the public to a specific issue facing the community. Remember, the acronym is doing just that, Seeking Aid From Every Resident. The S.A.F.E.R. Alert is used sparingly so as not to create a sense of complacency within the community but rather issued only as needed for topics of significant importance for the public's safety. An example of a S.A.F.E.R. Alert may be to reach out to the community for assistance in solving a particular crime, alerting residents of a serious crime, scam, or issue within the community.

S.A.F.E.R. Kids

Many agencies engage community children in a number of safety related educational opportunities and events including bike rodeos, fingerprinting, school safety talks, internet safety meetings, fire safety and other important safety topics. By attaching the S.A.F.E.R. Kids program name to your event, you are again planting the seed of community involvement even at a very early age. The S.A.F.E.R. Kids program carries with it a nice name that associates the goal as well, keeping kids safer and as a collective effort of the community, keeping the community safer.



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S.A.F.E.R. Awards

In Ada, one of their greatest assets and known nationally for their role in the National Football League is the only NFL football factory in the United States. Every football that is produced for the NFL is produced locally in Ada, Ohio. The S.A.F.E.R. Award should be an item that is produced locally and is specific to your community if possible. The Ada S.A.F.E.R. Award is an NFL Football with the S.A.F.E.R. Logo on one of the panels of the football along with the recipient's name. The S.A.F.E.R. Award should be presented to residents who have contributed substantially to the safety and security of your city. Understanding that there are folks who will not want nor should be recognized publicly, all that contribute in a significant way should be presented with the S.A.F.E.R. Award, even privately as appropriate.

In the past, the Ada S.A.F.E.R. Committee has authorized S.A.F.E.R. Awards for crime tips, substantial community involvement by their university in providing housing and meals in times of community disaster, and to folks who have addressed quality of life issues in a substantial way leading to a safer community.

As a result of careful consideration of the S.A.F.E.R. Award, the Wilson's Football has become a desired item within the community and an award that is really appreciated. The Wilson's Sporting Goods is a member of the S.A.F.E.R. Committee representing Ada businesses, a great fit.

Leadership

Many of us have traveled to cities in the United States and have observed the various crime watch or neighborhood watch signs that have grown old and faded. As an observer of those signs, one could easily surmise that not only is the sign forgotten, but the program which it represents is probably old, faded and forgotten as well. Neither the good citizens nor the criminal has any faith that true crime watch or community partnerships are happening.

Leadership does not let the program grow old and become forgotten. The S.A.F.E.R. program cannot be instituted and handed over to a committee to keep going; leadership must come from the agency that is responsible for community safety and leadership requires the agency director to insist on continual S.A.F.E.R. innovation and advancement.

Whenever there is an opportunity to mention S.A.F.E.R., through S.A.F.E.R. Alerts, S.A.F.E.R. Kids, S.A.F.E.R. Paper, S.A.F.E.R. Awards and even S.A.F.E.R. Signs, the public will continue to see that the idea of a safer community abounds and importantly, so will the criminals.

If the bad guys believe that someone is watching, or community participants are willing to join the fight against crime then there is a real chance that he or she will choose to do their criminal enterprise somewhere else or hopefully nowhere else.

The agency leader must insist that S.A.F.E.R. is used at every opportunity and that folks are rewarded for their participation, even privately as appropriate.

In Ada, the agency made it a point to establish a S.A.F.E.R. declaration at the beginning of the program wherein all the committee members signed the declaration and posted them in their perspective business or schools. To keep the S.A.F.E.R. program fresh and new, this declaration is signed every 5 years by the S.A.F.E.R. Committee to "renew" commitment to a S.A.F.E.R. community.

In 2003, the S.A.F.E.R. program was awarded the Ohio Community Policing Strategy of the Year by the Ohio Crime Prevention Association. In Ada, they believe very strongly that Ada is in fact a safer community because of the continued participation of residents through the S.A.F.E.R. program. In 2017 Ada was named the 16th Safest City in Ohio and in 2018, Ada was named the 9th safest city in Ohio.



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The S.A.F.E.R. program is available for use throughout our nation's communities, the ADA Police Department simply asks that agencies who intend on implementing S.A.F.E.R. contact Chief Michael Harnishfeger of the Ada Police Department, so they may track the agencies and communities who have adopted this policing strategy.

Further questions may be addressed to:

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About the Inventor of S.A.F.E.R.:

Chief Michael Harnishfeger is the police chief of Ada, Ohio located in northwest Ohio and is a 35-year veteran of Ohio law enforcement, 27 years as a police chief. Chief Harnishfeger served as President of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police along with various committees and boards.

Chief Harnishfeger is a graduate of the F.B.I. National Academy, Ohio Association of Chief of Police Certified Law Enforcement Executive program and Ohio Association of Chief of Police, Police Executive Leadership College.

Chief Harnishfeger is the recipient of the Inaugural "I Contribute" to a SAFER Ohio Award through the Ohio Department of Public Safety, the Hardin County Liberty Bell Award, and the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police William Crozier Distinguished Service Award.